



## FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR

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Matt Beaton, Auditor

### **Why did you remove the “Business Reply” postage from the return envelope?**

**Answer:** Discontinuing the use of the permit was the only way to assure that the returning ballots meet both our legal requirements and elections goals of integrity, security and transparency.

**Explanation:** The facilities closures and processing changes at the United States Postal Service in 2012 spurred a review by Franklin County Elections of our relationship with them and how potential changes may impact our legal requirements and stated goals. There were many considerations when deciding to discontinue the use of a Business Reply Permit. We reviewed the applicable state laws, toured the Pasco mail handling facility and analyzed the impact and cost of any changes. The existing process does not require a postmark. The local facility had been providing postmarks at our request as an enhanced customer service. The prospect of facilities closures, process transfers and shrinking budgets at the USPS created unpredictable conditions that are unacceptable in the conduct of elections.

[See Correspondence Below](#)

May 17, 2012

U.S. Postmaster  
Dana Alderson  
Pasco, WA 99301

Dear Dana,

I appreciate the tour of the Pasco mail facility that Rick Smith provided to the Franklin County Elections staff. Our ongoing discussions regarding the pending possible changes at the USPS has precipitated a complete internal review of the mail processing of returned ballots. Historically the relationship has been very good and predictable as it has all been local. The current budget cutting environment at the USPS has focused us on the potential location changes and what that would mean to the flexibility of the processing.

To comply with Processing incoming ballots RCW 29A.40.110 (3) in which it states "...shall examine the postmark on the return envelope..." and "... must be postmarked no later than the day of the primary or election." all ballots should carry a postmark. The importance of the postmark is also referenced in RCW 29A.04.031 and WAC 434-250-120.

This is an issue because currently Franklin County provides voters with postage prepaid ballot return envelopes in the form of a Business Reply Permit. We understand postmarks are not a normal and customary part of the processing of Business Reply Permitted mail. If we are going to continue with our Business Reply Permit we will need a guarantee of a postmark on every ballot processed as a matter of process change by the USPS. Please acknowledge this understanding by formally replying directly to the important element of this letter: the guarantee of Business Reply Permit processing change on return ballots to assure compliance with the governing RCW 29A.40.110.

If at any time the daily postmarking is not possible, we need to be notified immediately so that we can discontinue use of the BRM permit. The postmark is required by RCW and our intent is to assure the processes we utilize calls for its use.

Thank you again for working with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Beaton", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt Beaton  
Franklin County Auditor

Pasco Post Office



June 6, 2012

RECEIVED

JUN 07 2012

Matt Beaton  
Franklin County Auditor  
PO Box 1451  
Pasco WA 99301

Franklin County Auditor

Dear Matt,

I am in receipt of your letter dated May 17, 2012 in which you were inquiring about the possibility of guaranteeing a postmark on every ballot processed as a Business Reply Mail piece. Business Reply Mail is designed to be identified by the machinery that faces and cancels the mail as a piece of mail that doesn't require a postmark, thus is segregated from the mail needing cancellations. The mail is separated and processed differently since it must be hand counted and processed to procure the funds from the Business Reply Permit account prior to delivery to the customer.

In the past we have worked closely with the auditor's office to ensure timely processing and delivery of the Ballots on a daily basis. We developed a system to gather the ballots and process them at the Main Post Office on Court Street to expedite the mail to be ready for pick up once it gets to the Down Town Station on Lewis Street. We did make an exception and did postmark/cancel those pieces received the day of and the days after the primary or election.

I regret to inform you the guarantee of a postmark on every ballot processed as Business Reply Mail is not possible. I am sorry, but this is simply not an option Business Reply Mail was never intended to be postmarked since it is manually verified and processed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana Alderson", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dana Alderson  
Postmaster  
Pasco WA 99301

3500 W Court St  
Pasco WA 99301-9998  
(509) 543-2189